

The Kohl Government attempts to blunt the impact of comments by CSU leader Strauss on zero option while stepping up its assault on the SPD position. Moscow expresses its good intentions on European security issues and cites opinion polls as evidence of mounting European opposition to the US position.

UK

The British press continues to give wide coverage to polls on INF and nuclear weapons issues, stressing the effect of the women's protest at Greenham Common on public opinion (almost half of those surveyed claimed the women's protest had led them to reverse their opinion on stationing cruise missiles in the UK). Reports also emphasized poll results showing Conservative Party supporters nearly evenly divided on the issue. The British Social Democratic Party reportedly is coming under increasing pressure to support a nuclear freeze when its governing council meets Saturday.

Germany

Kohl and Genscher escalated their attacks on the SPD over the weekend. Defense Minister Woerner, in an interview released yesterday, explained that his government, including Genscher, supports the zero option "because we seriously want it and because it equally takes into account the security interests of all sides." He added that he expects Moscow to make further concessions at Geneva after a CDU/CSU victory on 6 March. According to Woerner, the Alliance later in the year would "examine the extent of its counterarming needs...in light of concrete results of negotiations reached by them." On Strauss' criticism of the zero option, a government spokesman maintained that the CSU leader's rhetoric constituted "no dissent from the government position." Genscher, flying here today, has told a West German newspaper that US negotiators in Geneva have the Kohl government's "full backing."

France

Foreign Minister Cheysson on Sunday told French reporters that at Geneva "the whole question of equilibrium should be taken up again," and that the final position reached will be a compromise. Cheysson, alluding to his trip to Moscow next month, implied that INF would be a major discussion topic when he meets Soviet leaders.

Italy

Weekend and Monday papers headline recent statements by President Reagan on INF negotiations. General consensus is that US will show flexibility. The Socialist Party organ Avanti opined that a possible change in the current US position "could take place only after the European trip of Vice President Bush."

USSR

In an article pegged to the West European audience, yesterday's Pravda called for a "positive outcome" to the INF talks, noting that they will resume on Thursday. The article professes Moscow's interest in a broader European security dialogue, calls again for a freeze on conventional forces at the MBFR talks, and reiterates Soviet willingness to extend military confidence-building measures to "the entire European part" of the USSR. And in today's issue, Pravda again calls on the West to respond to the USSR's INF proposals with something other than "stereotyped claims." TASS highlights the assessment of the NYTimes Bonn correspondent that "there is almost unanimity on the right and on the left that the Reagan administration should abandon the zero option."